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19 Feb 82

TALKING POINTS FOR WORLD-WIDE BRIEFING

Afghanistan

- I. The Soviets have reassessed and adjusted their military policy in Afghanistan in reaction to insurgent successes during 1981.
 - A. At the end of the year, the Afghan government estimated that it controlled only ¹⁷~~23~~ percent of the administrative districts; the insurgents controlled almost ⁸~~6~~ percent. (15% neither controls)
 - B. Insurgent pressure on supply lines occasionally forced the Soviets to suspend road convoys for periods of several days.
 - C. More than 1,000 Soviet armored vehicles were at least temporarily put out of action in 1981.
 - D. The Afghan Army had at least 30,500 deserters during the year.
 1. Army strength remained at 30-40,000 men only because of press-gang recruiting.
 2. The new recruits are poorly trained, and many soon desert, taking their weapons with them to the insurgents.
 - E. The Babrak government's efforts to win popular support have had no apparent impact on the Afghan people, and the bitter feud between the ruling party's two factions continues.
 - F. Soviet casualties and loss, very conservatively estimated, are as follows:

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Soviet casualties in Afghanistan

*10,000 confirmed combat casualties

of which 3,000 killed

*a conservative number, likely to be higher

Equipment losses

at least 1,000* armored vehicles

at least 120* helicopters

of which 100 during first year

*also conservative figures

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II. There have been a number of signs of change since Marshal Sokolov--who was in command during most of 1980--returned to Kabul in September 1981.

A. For the first time since early 1980 new ground combat units have arrived.

1. The augmentation of 5,000 to 10,000 men--raising Soviet strength to around 90,000--began in November and will apparently end this month.
2. About half of the new units are KGB border troops.
3. Some of the reinforcements will protect supply lines and important towns, freeing regular Soviet Army units for operations against the insurgents. Other new units will be used for counterinsurgency operations.

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D. Much greater emphasis is now given to the large-scale sweeps favored by Sokolov, and much less to the small-unit raids Mayorov relied on.

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III. The changes made so far are unlikely to affect notably the military situation.

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A. Large-scale sweeps accomplished little in 1980 and seem to have been no more effective since they were resumed.

B. Even with 10,000 more men, the Soviets will be unable to garrison most of the country or control the borders.

1. To crush the insurgency, and more effectively limit insurgent movement by placing military pressure on Pakistan and Iran, 300,000 additional men would be required.

C. Insurgent morale is much higher than a year ago.

1. They are using landmines and anti-tank rockets effectively against convoys.
2. The insurgents have had some success using heavy machineguns against helicopters, but believe they could do much more with large numbers of surface-to-air missiles.
3. There has been growing cooperation among insurgent bands, but they are still far from united.
4. At the same time, there has been a disturbing increase in politically motivated clashes among the insurgents. This is not yet a serious problem, but in time could become dangerous.
5. The insurgents are not in a position to defeat main Soviet units, and prospects for their being able to do so in the foreseeable future are dim.

IV. The Soviets have two main options in the coming year.

- A. They can continue with a long-term effort to wear down the insurgents. Even if they follow this course, we

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expect some additional reinforcements will arrive to strengthen security of supply lines and military posts.

B. The Soviets are likely to test their first option for several months at least before turning to the second--a large-scale augmentation.

1. Because of logistic problems, such a buildup would likely be gradual.

2. There are no indications so far of preparations for a large-scale augmentation.

C. Under either option, the Soviets might well step up pressure on Pakistan.

1. There was an increase in serious border incursions last fall, and these could resume in the spring.

2. There is some evidence of Soviet or Afghan efforts to stir up border tribes and to help Zia's political opponents, but so far neither is a significant threat.

3. The Soviets continue to warn Islamabad about the dangers of its support to the insurgents and at the same time offer economic aid and Afghan recognition of the disputed border if Islamabad will change its policies.

4. Upgrading of weaponry (SA8, IFF, trucks, etc.) represent enhancements which could be related to potential operations in Pakistan.

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